

AUG 19 2009

His Worship Sam Katz
Mayor
City of Winnipeg
2nd Floor, Council Building
510 Main Street
Winnipeg MB R3B 1B9

Your Worship:

Council's request for a review and amendment to legislation to create stronger conflict of interest rules and guidelines for the City of Winnipeg and council has been forwarded to me. Council suggests legislation could be strengthened through measures such as the establishment of a separate municipal Conflict of Interest Commissioner or the expansion of the role and responsibilities of the provincial Commissioner.

The Province on June 2, 2009 introduced Bill 35, *The Municipal Conflict of Interest and Campaign Financing Act (Various Acts Amended)*, to increase transparency and accountability in municipalities. This significant Bill extends fundamental municipal campaign finance practices and conflict of interest rules to all Manitoba municipalities.

A key aspect of the Bill strengthens existing municipal conflict of interest rules, by requiring council members' annual statement of assets and interests to be publicly available, beginning in 2009. With this change, citizens will clearly know that the decisions of their elected officials are objective, fair, and in the best interest of their community. Similar rules apply to Provincial MLAs, whose statements have been public for many years.

Bill 35 also provides that all municipalities adopt a code of conduct for municipal employees, which must include specific conflict of interest provisions. Winnipeg already has a code of conduct for municipal employees. Senior provincial public servants are also subject to similar rules, under *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act*.

Council also proposes that conflict of interest legislation be strengthened by providing for a municipal Conflict of Interest Commissioner. The City of Winnipeg, using its existing authority in *The City of Winnipeg Charter*, has authority to establish a separate municipal office for a Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Council may wish to explore this option, if this issue continues to be a priority for the City.

The issue of conflict of interest is important, and is critical to the accountability and transparency of government at all levels. I appreciate receiving council's suggestions on how existing legislation could be strengthened.

Yours sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
STEVE ASHTON**

Steve Ashton
Minister

c: Mr. Richard Kachur

b.c. Minister (09-171)
Deputy Minister (09-0235)
Deputy Minister – City of Winnipeg Day File
Laurie Davidson
Lynne Nesbitt

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